



Idaho State Department of Agriculture

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Agreement # 12-25-B-0850

Final Performance Report

Submitted: September 28, 2012

Project Summary:

Specialty Crop Block Grant 12-25-B-0850 commenced July 1, 2009 and concluded July 1, 2012. The purpose of the project was to enhance the competitiveness of Idaho specialty crops through advertising, retail promotions, foodservice events, nursery campaigns, educational programs and public relations efforts. These projects were managed as part of the Idaho Preferred program – a marketing effort within the Idaho State Department of Agriculture Market Development Division to identify and promote Idaho food and agriculture products.

In 2009, the “locavore” movement was gaining momentum. Across the nation, consumers were increasingly demanding local foods for their freshness, flavor, nutritional benefits and support of local agriculture. 2008 Consumer market research conducted by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture confirmed this trend. In Idaho, 88% of respondents reported buying the same or more local products and supporting the local economy was their primary reason for doing so. This positive market environment led to the effort to increase demand for local specialty crops through broad marketing strategies funded by Specialty Crop funds. These demand-building efforts built on promotions funded by previous Specialty Crop Block grants.

Project Approach:

This grant initially encompassed five domestic marketing strategies to increase the competitiveness of Specialty Crops in Idaho including retail promotions, foodservice events, nursery campaigns, educational programs and advertising and public relations efforts. A change of scope was granted in 2010 that added an international component to allow for promoting specialty crops through in-bound and outbound trade missions and export training and assistance for Specialty Crop producers. The grant also allowed for support of a staff person to assist in implementing the domestic and international marketing strategies to increase the competitiveness of Specialty Crops in Idaho.

Project Details, Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

Strategy 1: Expand Retail Promotions

Project Summary and Approach:

In order to help Idaho specialty crop growers identify their products at retail, a wide variety of point of sale (POS) materials were produced and provided to producers and retailers. These materials included the Idaho Preferred logo. 2008 Market research showed that over 40% of consumers recognize the logo and its role as an indicator of Idaho grown foods. Materials included rail strips, headers, banners, wine bottle neckers, balloons, wipe-off price cards and stickers of all sizes. Materials were made available free of charge to participating retailers via website, direct mail offers and on-site visits. In addition, special events were carried out with retailers to increase consumer awareness and demand for local specialty crops. Walmart and Albertsons hosted outdoor produce markets where fruit and vegetable growers exhibited their products at the Associated Grocers Foodshow in Salt Lake City. Retail partnerships were established with many Idaho retailers including Walmart, Albertsons, Paul’s Markets, Stein’s Markets, Swenson’s, Broulim’s, Super 1 stores and Associated Store members.

Some highlights include:

Walmart:

- Outdoor markets at the Meridian location in 2009, 2010, and 2011 featured all local produce to kick off Idaho Preferred Month in September. In-store produce promotions during September took place in 16 Walmart locations. Specialty crops included apples, pears, peaches, plums, pluots, nectarines, tomatoes, sweet corn, onions, cantaloupe, grapes, potatoes, squash and pumpkins.
- Ticket to Healthy Snacking events in 2010 and 2011 provided over 2500 students with a ticket to receive a free bag of fresh fruits and vegetables on one day during Idaho Preferred Month outdoor market. A total of over 500 students took advantage of the offer and nearly 1000 pounds of produce was provided drawing positive media coverage of Walmart's partnership with local growers.
- Idaho Preferred hosted a vendor meeting for local producers interested in selling to Walmart. Seven specialty crop producers attended.
- Walmart featured specialty crops in its print ads during August-September at no charge to producers.

Albertsons:

- Outdoor Markets at 32 Idaho locations were held during July – September 2009, 2010, and 2011. The promotions featured local cherries, apricots, peaches, nectarines, green beans, sweet corn, watermelon, cantaloupe, and cabbage.
- Radio ads featuring local Idaho Preferred fruit and vegetable farmers talking about their product availability at Albertsons stores aired in July-September 2010.
- Sales increased 17% to 47% over non-promotional periods on local fruits and vegetables were noted during summer and fall "Farmers Market" promotions.

Paul's Market:

- Print ads in July-October 2009, 2010, 2011 promoted Idaho produce including cherries, apricots, green beans, sweet corn, fresh herbs, apples, peaches, nectarines, melons, peppers and dry beans.
- Television ads promoting Idaho grown apples and beans available at Paul's Market were produced and aired in Sept-October 2009, 2010, and 2011. Ads were produced by Paul's and placement costs were split.

Small Markets

- Custom POS was created for produce department for 5 Stein's Markets in northern Idaho.
- 6 Super 1 stores received POS materials for produce promotion in 2010.
- Custom POS materials were created to identify organic Idaho produce for Moscow and Boise Co-Ops.
- Individual vendor meetings were set up for Idaho producers to meet with Rosauer's, Huckleberries and Whole Foods when they entered the Idaho Market in 2011-12. 24 specialty crop producers met with buyers from these stores.
- Associated Food Stores services 93 stores in 70 communities across Idaho. In June 2011 and 2012, Idaho Preferred represented Idaho producers at the Associated food show in Salt Lake City. Idaho's two largest fruit and vegetable growers attended the show to promote their products to Idaho retailers.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

The goals of the Retail Promotion component of this grant were:

1. Raise consumer awareness of the diversity and availability of Idaho products in retailers throughout the state
2. Increase sales of Idaho specialty crops in retail markets
3. Increase consumer identification of the Idaho Preferred logo in and outside the Treasure Valley area.

Achievement of these goals was measured by the following Expected Outcomes:

1. *By 2011, consumer awareness of the Idaho Preferred brand in the Treasure Valley (Boise area) will increase from 48% to 52%.*

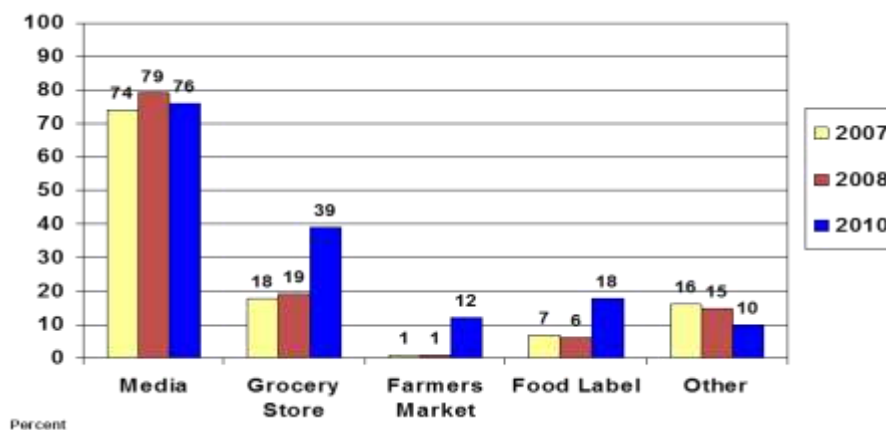
Outcome 1: Market research conducted in November 2010 found that 77% of consumers in the Treasure Valley reported having seen or heard the Idaho Preferred message far exceeding goal of 52%. (See Chart 1, page 10)

2. *By 2011, consumer awareness of the Idaho Preferred brand outside of the Treasure Valley will increase from current level of 37% to 41%.*

Outcome 2: Market research in conducted in November 2010 found that awareness in the southeast part of the state rose to 74%, 67% in south central part of state and 38% in the northern part of the state. Awareness levels exceeded the goal in all parts of the state except northern Idaho. This is due to the fact that television is not part of the media plan in northern Idaho due to the cost of buying airtime in the Spokane, WA market. Also, most specialty crops are grown in the southern part of Idaho and transportation costs prohibit most of north/south shipments – especially since many of these same crops are grown in eastern Washington in much closer proximity to this area of Idaho. Therefore, minimal retail promotion of specialty crops likely contributed to lower consumers' awareness in this region. (See Chart 2, Page 10)

3. *By 2011, the number of consumers who report seeing the Idaho Preferred logo at retail will increase from 19% to 25%.*

Outcome 3: Market research conducted in November 2010 found that the number of consumers who reported seeing the Idaho Preferred logo at retail more than doubled, increasing from 19% to 39%.



Beneficiaries:

There are 35 Idaho Preferred fruit growers, 16 of which took part in the one or more of the retail promotions made possible by this grant. In addition, there are 37 vegetable growers of which 20 took part in retail promotions. 10 of the 11 Idaho Preferred wineries benefitted from these retail programs, as did 2 nursery growers.

Strategy 2: Enhance Foodservice Promotions

Project Summary and Approach:

Consumers' commitment to purchasing local products has created strong demand for Idaho food and wines in restaurants throughout the state. Effective and consistent communication between producers and chefs leads to more menuing of local products. To facilitate this connection several foodservice promotions were conducted.

Some highlights include:

- Farmer Chef Collaboratives, a cross between foodshow and speed dating, were held in Moscow and Sun Valley in 2010, and in Boise in 2011. Twenty one specialty crop producers attended the events in 2010 and were able to market their products to 25 restaurants. In 2011, 10 specialty crop growers met with 17 chefs in the Treasure Valley.
- Menu Promotions were conducted in 2009 and 2010. Participating restaurants were required to use and identify a minimum of two specialty crop items on their menu to be eligible to receive cooperatively funded print ads or menu printing. Potatoes, onions, herbs, wine and fruit were highlighted in this menu promotion.
- Several events with foodservice distributors were conducted to increase awareness and sales of specialty crops to restaurants. In 2009 and 2010, Idaho Preferred offered producers the opportunity to exhibit their products at both Sysco and Food Services of America (FSA) foodshows. A total of 15 specialty crop growers participated in these shows. In 2010 and 2011, Idaho Preferred teamed up with FSA to host farm tours for sales personnel and customers. Both years, the tour visited tree-fruit, vegetable, herb and grape growers.
- Direct Chef communications also helped promote specialty crops. A chef newsletter is distributed regularly to over 100 chefs across the state providing information on seasonal availability of specialty crops including fruits, vegetables and herbs and highlighting Idaho producers and wineries. Specialty crop producers also have the opportunity to present their products directly to chefs at monthly American Culinary Federation local chapter meetings held in Boise. Each month producers are invited to show, sample and market their products to 25-30 chefs and culinary students. To date 20 fruit, vegetable and herb growers and 8 wineries have taken advantage of this marketing opportunity.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

The goals of the Foodservice component of this grant include:

1. Increase the use and sales of Idaho specialty crop products in local restaurants.
2. Promote restaurants that feature Idaho specialty crop products on their menus.
3. Assist specialty crop producers in marketing their products through the foodservice channel.
4. Assist specialty crop producers in establishing relationships with local foodservice distributors.

Achievement of these goals was measured by the following Expected Outcomes:

1. *Four Farmer Chef Collaboratives will be held throughout the state reaching a total of 60 chefs and 80 producers, including at least 35 specialty crop producers.*

Outcome #1: Three Farmer Chef Collaboratives were held throughout the state reaching a total of 42 chefs and 60 producers, including 31 specialty crop producers. The goal for producer and chef involvement was not met because the decision was made not to hold a fourth Farmer Chef Collaborative. Having experienced a decline in participation in the third event, a survey was sent to all Idaho Preferred members asking for their input and assessing interest in future Collaboratives. Results indicated that there was not enough interest among producers to hold another Collaborative in 2011. However, communication will continue and future Farmer Chef Collaboratives may be held upon request by chefs and/or producers.

2. *Six restaurants will take part in the first cooperative advertising program and each participating restaurant will identify at least two specialty crop menu items (including wine) on their menu with the Idaho Preferred label.*

Outcome #2: A total of nine restaurants took part in two cooperative advertising menu promotions in 2009 and 2010. All participating restaurants identified at least five Idaho Preferred products on their menus, of which at least two were specialty crops including potatoes, onions, herbs, wine and fruits. Participating restaurants estimated that approximately \$15,000 in incremental sales could be attributed to this promotion.

3. *At least one event will be initiated with two foodservice distributors that will include promotion of specialty crop products.*

Outcome #3: Foodshows at both Sysco and Food Services of America in 2009, 2010, and 2011 promoted specialty crops. In addition, tours of specialty crop growers were sponsored jointly with FSA, and print advertisements were cooperative funded with Sysco that promoted restaurants using specialty crops on their menus. One major fruit grower reported a 26% increase in sales from 2009 to 2010 as a result of promotions with Food Services of America.

Beneficiaries:

Thirty one specialty crop producers participated in Farmer Chef Collaboratives. Twenty eight specialty crop producers took part in Chef meetings. Fifteen specialty crop producers exhibited at distributor food shows.

Strategy 3: Expand Nursery Promotions and participation in Idaho Preferred program

Project Summary and Approach:

The nursery industry is an important part of Idaho agriculture. Trees, flowers, bedding plants and other landscape materials are produced throughout the state. Idaho Preferred works to increase consumer awareness of Idaho-grown nursery products through point of sale materials and to promote these products through advertising. This grant allowed for distribution of previously produced POS materials, creation of new marketing materials and seasonal airing of a nursery-specific television ad created through previous grant funds.

Some highlights include:

- Three weeks of television ads aired in markets across the state in April and May of 2010 and 2011.
- In 2010, Idaho Preferred partnered with Zamzow's, a local retail nursery with seven stores, to promote plant materials grown by two local Idaho Preferred nurseries. Custom banners, plant stand signs, and plant stakes identified bedding plants and flowers grown by Ward's Greenhouse and Flora of Boise. Radio ads funded by Zamzow's encouraged consumers to look for locally grown products in their stores.

In 2011, the partnership expanded and Ward's Greenhouse was awarded the full-service provider contract by Zamzows. Custom tray talkers, banners, plant stakes and signs identified the products as Idaho-grown.

- Custom designed banners were provided for Albertsons and Paul's stores to identify their Idaho bedding plants, hanging baskets and flower bowls and products grown by Flora were identified at Costco with stickers and price signs.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

The goals of the Nursery Promotion component of this grant include:

1. Increase awareness of Idaho-grown nursery products throughout the state.
2. Increase number of Idaho retail promotions of locally grown plant materials.
3. Increase sales of Idaho nursery items.

Achievement of these goals was measured by the following Expected Outcomes:

1. *Conduct at least one major nursery retail promotion in the Treasure Valley and one in another area of the state.*

Outcome #1: A major nursery promotion was implemented in the Treasure Valley in 2010 and 2011 as described above that included point of sale materials and radio advertising. POS materials were made available to nurseries around the state including McCall, Hailey, Idaho Falls and Twin Falls. In addition, nursery POS materials were provided to all 32 Albertsons locations throughout the state and delivered by Wards Greenhouse with their plants and flowers. One participating greenhouse reported a sales increase of 33% from 2009 to 2010 to a retailer who used the POS materials. The same grower reported a 41% increase in sales from 2010 to 2011 with another retailer who used Idaho Preferred POS on all of his nursery items.

2. *Buy three weeks of television advertising statewide airing the nursery ad created in 2009.*

Outcome #2: Television ads were placed in Boise, Twin Falls, Idaho Falls, Pocatello and Lewiston markets in April and May in 2010 and March-April 2011. Ads aired in all day parts including popular primetime programming and late news slots. The campaign reached an average of 72% of target audience 5.3 times.

3. *Recruit ten new nurseries participants into the Idaho Preferred program*

Outcome #3: During the duration of this grant, 11 nurseries were recruited into the Idaho Preferred program.

Beneficiaries:

19 Nursery growers and 15 retail nurseries benefit from the nursery promotions carried out as part of this grant program.

Strategy #4: Continue Education Programs

Project Summary and Approach:

The goal of the education component of this grant is to continue to expand teachers' and students' knowledge of Idaho specialty crops, and expand the offering of Idaho specialty crop products on school lunch menus. Programs include teacher training workshops, creating and providing resource materials, and assisting schools to add Idaho foods on their cafeteria menus. ISDA partners with Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) Child Nutrition Programs in the planning and implementation of the educational programs listed below.

Some highlights include:

- The Idaho Farm-to-School Manual, co-authored by ISDA and ISDE, was released in June of 2010. The forty page how-to book provides school foodservice personnel with detailed information on how to implement a farm to school program in their cafeteria. The manual includes information on distribution, purchasing, regulations and marketing of local foods in a school foodservice program. This resource was introduced at the Idaho School Nutrition Association's (ISNA) summer conference in Worley in June 2010 where over 120 school foodservice personnel attended workshops designed to help start and/or expand farm to school programs in their districts. The Manual has since been distributed to all 700 Idaho School District Foodservice Directors as well as over 500 parents, school board members, teachers, and others interested in increasing the use of local products in the schools.
- ISDA and ISDE worked together to implement the first-ever Farm-to-School Pilot Program in five school districts throughout Idaho in September 2010. The pilot school districts were selected from across the state to implement individual programs in their schools. With lessons learned in the 2010 pilot, a "Best Practices" addendum to the Farm to School manual was released in 2011. The pilot schools received mini-grants, paid in part by specialty crop funds, to allow them to buy, serve and promote local fresh fruits and vegetables on their school lunch menus. Each school was required to use at least two Idaho Preferred® products in their school lunch menus per week for the month of September and one product/week for the remainder of the school year. Specialty crops used include bell peppers, cabbage, corn, green beans, carrots, onions, potatoes, apples grapes, honeydew, watermelon, peaches, plums, pluots, pears, zucchini and squash.
- To kick off the Farm-to-School Program in 2010, First Lady Lori Otter visited Morley Nelsen Elementary School in Boise to have lunch with students that included Idaho cantaloupe, cucumbers, and zucchini. Results from the 2010 pilot project found that Boise School District's schools served two to four local foods per day during September and at least one local food each week during the rest of the school year. This district, with 42 sites and 25,000 students, spent over \$156,700 on local foods during a 30 day pilot program from August 25 -September 30, 2010, of which \$24,618 was on specialty crops. The three other pilot schools reported \$2,069 of purchases of Idaho specialty crops during the 30-day pilot project.
- In 2011, a telephone survey of 31 schools was conducted and 77% of schools reported serving local foods at least seasonally. 2011 Farm to School programs also included training and producer exhibits at the summer Idaho School Nutrition Association meeting. As a result, 92 schools requested banners, signs or posters to promote their farm to school efforts in the cafeteria. A new page was added to the Idaho Preferred website with a list and map of schools reporting farm to school programs.
- ISDA collaborates with ISDE to create a variety of educational resources for distribution to teachers around the state. Each month the poster features a crop grown in Idaho

and provides information on production and nutrition as well as related classroom activities and recipes. Specialty crop posters feature honey, tomatoes, apricots, cherries, apples, peaches, pears, plums, pluots, potatoes, asparagus, beans, grapes, pumpkins, onions, legumes (peas, lentils, garbanzo beans) and berries.

- In 2011, a curriculum guides with lesson plans, activities, and powerpoint presentations on 10 different Idaho specialty crops including apples, peaches, pears, apricots, dry beans, tomatoes, berries, cherries, grapes and pluots was created and distributed to teachers through Ag in the Classroom summer workshops. These resources have been provided to over 70 educators to help them teach about Idaho specialty crops in their classrooms.
- Nearly 275,000 students in Idaho are reached through Idaho Preferred® educational programs each year.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

The goals of the Education component of this grant include:

1. Expand teacher and student knowledge of Idaho food and agriculture.
2. Increase use of local specialty crop products in school feeding programs.

Achievement of these goals was measured by the following Expected Outcomes:

1. *“Food of the Month” posters distribution will increase by 10%.*

Outcome #1: In 2007-2008, the first cycle of “Food of the Month” posters were created and distributed to over 300 teachers and 600 cafeterias throughout the state. In 2009-2010, the poster cycle was continued with additional Idaho products. Distribution has grown to include over 1000 educational contacts around the state, meeting the measurable outcome by increasing distribution by 10%.

2. *At least five Idaho specialty crop growers will establish contracts with school foodservice outlets in 2010 through the Farm to School program.*

Outcome #2: Nine Idaho specialty crop producers of grapes, apples, watermelon, squash, peaches, pluots, plums, green beans, sweet corn and pears established contracts with school foodservice outlets as a result of 2010-2011 Farm-to-School efforts.

Beneficiaries:

12 Idaho specialty crop growers directly benefitted from these Farm to School programs. In addition, 68 schools who report that they participate in Farm to School programs benefitted from serving local foods on their menus, and 700 school districts and over 275,000 children benefitted from increased agricultural knowledge.

Strategy #5: Increase Reach and Frequency of Advertising and Public Relations

Project Summary and Approach:

With so many food options available, it is critical to keep local foods top of mind with Idaho consumers. Effective advertising and public relations efforts remind consumers to look for and purchase Idaho specialty crops. Funds received from previous specialty crop grants, supported production and placement of television commercials featuring a variety of fruits, vegetables

and wine. The campaign resulted in 41% consumer awareness of the campaign in 2008. The purpose of this grant was to increase awareness of Idaho specialty crops through television, PR and website promotions.

Some highlights include:

- In 2010, nine weeks of television advertising was purchased in six television markets across the state. Three weeks of ads ran in April and May that focused solely on nursery items and were funded entirely by the 2008 specialty crop grant. In August-October 2010, six additional weeks of ads ran statewide. These ads featured 100% specialty crops and were funded partially with this grant. In 2011, nursery-related ads again ran for 3 weeks in April-May. In summer 2011, a new food-related specialty crop ad was created. Funds remaining in the TV budget for this grant were expended in September 2011.
- In January 2010, a new Idaho Preferred® website was launched. The site was redesigned to make it easier for consumers to find local producers of specialty crops and nurseries, as well as other Idaho products. Member listings were improved with live links to their own websites, updated product listing and contact information. A new organic listing was added as well as member resources, educational resources and events listings. In 2011, more improvements were made to the website including interactive maps showing producer, restaurant and retail locations; a blog and a Facebook page. Day-to-day management of the site is now done in-house to maximize flexibility and responsiveness while reducing maintenance costs.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

The goals of the Advertising and Public Relations component of this grant include:

1. Place four weeks of television advertising in the fall of 2010 to promote fresh fruits, vegetables and other specialty crops.
2. Earn ten press placements in daily papers and ten radio events throughout the state during FY 10
3. Increase website traffic by 25% by December 2010.

Achievement of these goals was measured by the following Expected Outcomes:

1. *Reach 75% of target audience of women 25-54 an average of four times.*

Outcome #1: The 2010 Idaho Preferred television campaign reached an average of 65.9% of our target audience statewide an average of 4.1 times. In 2011 the campaign reached 68.6% of target an average of 5.1 times.

2. *By 2011, consumer awareness of the Idaho Preferred brand in the Treasure Valley will increase from 48% to 52% as measured by Soundstats research.*

Outcome #2: Consumer market research completed in December 2010 found that awareness of the Idaho Preferred mark had reached 66% statewide. Awareness in the Treasure Valley reached 77% - far exceeding the expected measurable outcome. Research in 2010 was conducted by University of Idaho Social Sciences Unit as Soundstats research was no longer available in the Idaho market. (See Chart 1 below)

Chart 1:

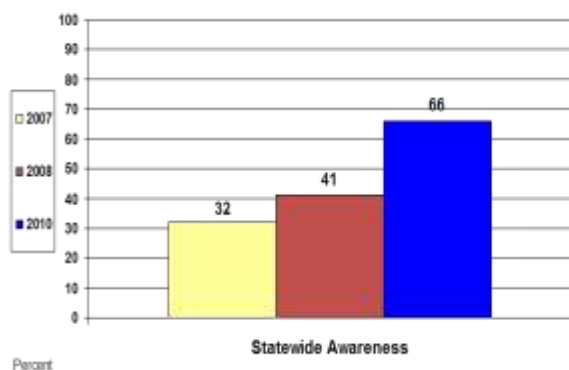
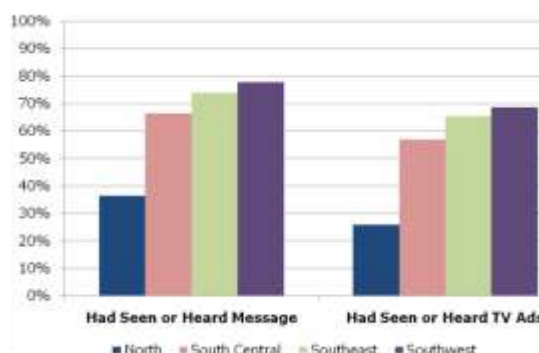


Chart 2:



3. *By 2011, consumer awareness of the Idaho preferred brand outside of the Treasure Valley will increase from 37% to 41% as measured by Soundstats research.*

Outcome #3: Market research conducted in November 2010 found that awareness in the southeast part of the state rose to 74%, 67% in south central part of state and 38% in the northern part of the state. Awareness levels exceeded goal in all parts of the state except northern Idaho. This is due to the fact that television is not part of the media plan in northern Idaho because of the high cost of buying media in the Spokane, WA market. (See Chart 2 above)

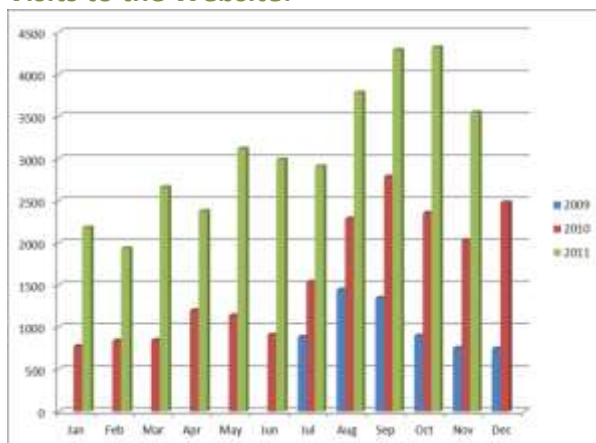
4. *Value of earned media will exceed \$40,000.*

Outcome #4: Value of earned media included \$18,600 for television and approximately \$5000 for print and on-line for a total value of \$23,600 - achieving over 415,000 impressions. The original goal of \$40,000 was set based on a "What's Fresh" series that ran in 2008 with the Idaho Statesman, the largest newspaper in the state. When the idea of a second season of these informational articles about seasonal produce availability was pitched in 2009, the paper declined. Therefore our earned print media was only about 25% of expected value.

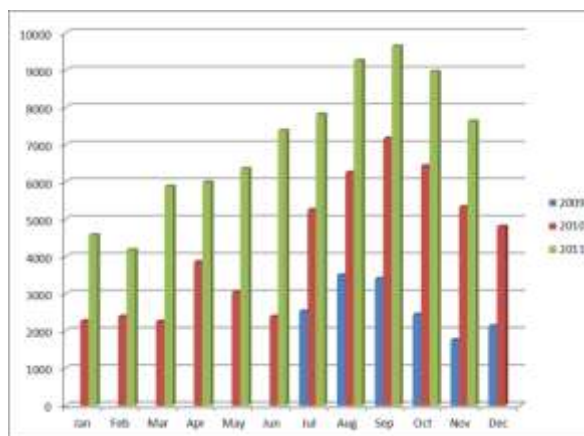
5. *Website traffic will increase to 10,500 consumers by December 2010*

Outcome #5: Monthly visits to the Idaho Preferred website have nearly tripled since the website was re-launched in July 2009. See chart below for monthly visit data through 2011.

Visits to the Website:



Page Views:



Beneficiaries: All Idaho Preferred specialty crop producers benefit from the advertising, public relations and website promotions funded by this grant. Currently 35 fruit growers, 42 vegetable growers and 13 wineries are members of Idaho Preferred. However, specialty crop growers in Idaho who are NOT members of Idaho Preferred also benefit from increased consumer awareness and self-reported intent to purchase fruits, vegetables and wine.

Strategy #6: Facilitate International Projects

Project Summary and Approach:

Exporting Idaho's agricultural products abroad is of vital importance to the state's overall economic strength and stability. Over ninety-five percent of the world's population lives outside U.S. borders and exports of high-value food products account for approximately 20% of Idaho farm gate receipts each year. Export sales rely largely on the relationship and many international buyers want to see the production regions first-hand. Idaho specialty crop growers have the opportunity to expand international markets and develop critical professional relationships with international buyers through in-bound trade missions. To assist Idaho specialty crop growers in expanding international marketing opportunities, a Change of Scope was written and approved for this grant to allow the specialty crop grant-funded staff member to work on international projects.

Some highlights include:

- An inbound buying mission from Taiwan focused on upcoming product releases and potential promotions for the 2011 season. As a result of the mission, sixteen Taiwanese retail and foodservice buyers met with 5 Idaho fruit, vegetable and wine producers/processors.
- A 2010 onion inbound included four ingredient buyers from large Japanese importers and wholesalers who toured packing sheds of 4 Idaho-Eastern Oregon onion growers.
- A delegation of five companies from the Western United States visited Hong Kong in November of 2010. The outbound mission aimed to introduce new U.S. agricultural products to chefs, food and beverage managers, distributors and importers from Hong Kong to expand export opportunities for U.S. companies. The delegation also exhibited at the Wine and Gourmet Asia trade show in Macau, China and met with hundreds of retailers and foodservice staff who were interested in wine and high-end products from the U.S. All companies made significant contacts and one company established a new distributor in the market as a result of this mission.
- In 2011, an inbound buying mission from Taiwan brought 6 buyers to Idaho interested in fresh produce. The group toured an orchard when cherries were in season and an onion packer/shipper.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

The Expected Measurable Outcomes of the International component of this grant include:

1. *The staff member will work with a minimum of eight Idaho specialty crop companies through international projects in calendar year 2010 and 2011.*

Outcome #1: Eleven specialty crop producers took advantage of international marketing opportunities described above.

2. *Idaho specialty crop producers will connect with approximately 12-15 pre-qualified buyers in calendar year 2010 and 2011 as a result of inbound buying missions.*

Outcome #2: Idaho specialty crop producers were able to connect with 26 qualified buyers as a result of inbound buying missions in 2010-2011.

Beneficiaries: The eleven specialty crop producers who took advantage of these international marketing opportunities were direct beneficiaries of this project.

Lessons Learned:

Obtaining sales data and making direct correlation to Idaho Preferred® specialty crop promotions is difficult. Retailers report they do not have the manpower or sufficient software to track sales data on specific items and small promotional events. Retailers often comment that customers have great feedback regarding the materials, and that they do see an increase in sales during promotional events or through the use of POS materials, but have consistently commented that they have no way to track percentage increases at this time.

Another problem encountered in promoting fruits and vegetables outside of the Treasure Valley is transportation and quality issues. A major promotion in 2011 in northern Idaho of produce grown in the Treasure Valley (in southern Idaho) had to be cancelled due to quality issues caused by weather-related production problems, inaccurate expectations and delayed delivery.

Inconsistent use of POS materials by individual stores is also a challenge in maintaining on-going retail promotions. The optimal solution would be to have a full time merchandiser who could continually visit all stores and install Idaho Preferred POS materials consistently. However, current levels of funding and staff do not allow for this option.

Similar issues occur in the foodservice channel. Restaurants owners and chefs have limited time and staff resources. As a result, restaurant participation in promotions is limited as is the ability to gather and report sales data. However, working with foodservice distributors who serve these restaurants does allow some sales data accumulation on a broader scope.

In nursery promotions, as with all retail programs, the promotion is only effective if products are identified accurately and consistently where consumers shop. Despite support of corporate and management level retail personnel, follow-through at the retail level varies dramatically. And, as stated earlier, collecting sales data needed to evaluate effectiveness of nursery promotion programs proved to be difficult.

The Farm to School movement in Idaho is growing rapidly. Staff resources are a limiting factor to growth as Farm to School is just one small part of staff responsibilities. The state of Idaho does not have a designated person or staff who work solely on farm to school programs as do some other states. Other barriers to expanding use of specialty crops in school cafeterias are fresh produce seasonality, inconsistent availability of local products through distributors in all parts of the state, reduced school budgets, new nutrition standards that limits use of local produce due to restrictive size specifications, and the fact that some smaller growers are often unable to meet the price points established in school cafeteria bids.

Overall, the increased consumer interest in local foods is a great benefit to specialty crop producers in Idaho and across the nation. Retailers, restaurants, distributors, schools, and even Farmer Markets are actively seeking local products for their customers. Efforts by Idaho State Department of Agriculture to identify and promote specialty crops is welcomed by the food industry as well as consumers who are interested in supporting the local agricultural industry by buying and selling locally grown foods.

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Additional Information:

Additional details on programs described above can be found at www.idahopREFERRED.com. The website includes: television commercials, POS materials, lists of specialty crop growers, Farm to School sites, retailers and restaurants who offer local products, news clips and more.